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ABSTRACT

Community colleges offering or contemplating offering television-based courses will be successful in promotional efforts if the fundamental, philosophical purpose is built upon a need for expanding current educational services to a population thus far unaffected by on-campus programs. Efforts in promoting television courses should be made so that the courses do not threaten on-campus programs, and are better understood by college faculty, more adequately supported by administrators, and more efficiently utilized by students. Since a new clientele is being sought and marketing represents a new adventure for colleges, new thinking and new approaches are indicated beyond traditional promotion methods such as radio, television, and newspaper ads, feature stories, direct mailing, posters, etc. Additional promotional efforts might include using billboards, bus benches, bus advertisements, and bumper stickers, advertising in small community newspapers, and taking advantage of widespread commercial promotion of national television courses such as Bronowski's "The Ascent of Man." College cooperation with community components such as public libraries, rehabilitation institutions, veterans' hospitals, clubs and organizations, and travel agencies can increase visibility and enrollment, and college faculty and students can also be effective recruiters and supporters for television courses. (TR)

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EFFECTIVE PROMOTION IN A GREATER METROPOLITAN AREA

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EFFECTIVE PROMOTION IN A GREATER METROPOLITAN AREA

PRESENTATION AT THE AACJC 1978 CONFERENCE IN THE

ATLANTA HILTON IN THE FORUM ENTITLED

"TELECOURSE ENROLLMENT THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PROMOTION"

In order for you to understand and hopefully appreciate my remarks, I want to state immediately the premise on which my presentation is based. It is simply this: Community colleges that are offering or contemplating to offer TV based courses will be successful in promotional efforts if the fundamental, philosophical purpose is built upon a need for expanding current educational services to a population that has thus far been unaffected by on-campus programs. This is an extemely important proposition because too often the use of educational television has been clouded in peripheral issues not directly related to the desire of reaching a new clientele.

I am advancing this position because it seems to be the most rational basis for moving into media based programs given the current climate for the adult learner and for the overall advancement of the learning society. Proceeding under this assumption, let me state that the premise I advance directs efforts in promoting television courses in such a way as to have them become less threatening to the on-campus programs, better understood by the faculty, more adequately supported by administrators and in the final analysis more efficiently utilized by students.

This is not to say that television programs that can be viewed in the comforts of one's own home cannot likewise serve the traditional on-campus student or supplement existing classroom courses for surely they can. My contention is that that's not the proper emphasis.

The topic of my presentation is "Effective Promotion in a Greater Metropolitan Area". I will stick to that topic as closely as I can but you should recognize that the principles and concepts that apply to recruitment of television students are essentially the same regardless of the locale. In certain respects, the metropolitan area provides many more opportunities to be creative in one's promotion. It also provides some obstacles in that there are many more avenues to explore, much more territory to cover and lots more people to reach. However, again, what will be offered certainly has applicability with varying degrees of adaptation to almost any geographic region.

The whole notion of marketing one's educational products or promoting or advertising or recruiting or otherwise informing the public of your services is to some extent a new venture for institutions of higher education. True, there's always been some general attempt to list or describe services through conventional college catalogues, to occasionally utilize newspaper ads or to rely on a public relations brochure but a new phenomena is beginning to emerge. If community colleges are to be more effective then they must be more imaginative and precise in ways in which they inform their potential audience of their educational services.

At one extreme there are some boards of trustees and legislators who think educators have no business being involved in advertising, promoting or otherwise marketing their educational programs. At the other extreme there are people like those shown in the CBS Sixty Minute program two weeks ago who were shockingly successful in selling Ph.D diplomas without any educational requirements. The dilemma can be resolved in a well reasoned approach that community colleges that are funded by the public are essentially owned by the

public. These colleges are providing important human services and striving to find more efficient ways to meet the economic and social needs of the community. If the general citizenry does not know about these services how can education achieve its purpose for which public monies are advanced? Or perhaps in even courser terms, if the public does not know what's available how can we expect them to take advantage of it? I am suggesting that educational institutions have a basic responsibility to inform their constituancy about their instructional television programs, and that this must be concomitant with a commitment to put forth the necessary planning and resources to develop an effective advertising campaign.

Since we are talking about a new adventure for colleges - the marketing game and we are aiming towards a population that has essentially been unaffected by community college education new thinking and new avenues of approach clearly are indicated. The title of this forum "Telecourse Enrollment Through Effective Community Promotion" gives some hint as to what might be used, that is, taking the word "community" there are very many ways as all of us know to promote a particular educational program. All of the traditional ways are available and useful. They simply can be mentioned; radio, television, newspaper ads, feature stories, speaking engagements, direct mailing, posters, etc. You can then move to a little more of the unusual - billboards, bus benches, back of taxicabs, bus advertisements, bumper stickers and all these can be effective and all of them have varying degrees of payoff. This is not to imply that what is perceived by an institution as widespread publicity reaches all segments of the community.

After five years of a fairly comprehensive institutional television and radio program throughout the Greater Miami area utilizing seven different

TV channels and two different radio stations and having enrolled some 25,000 to date, it is not uncommon at all for myself or other members of the administration or the faculty to talk to their friends and neighbors and find out that they have no idea that Miami-Dade was offering such programs. This, when you consider extensive multi-dimensional aspect of advertising, more than subtlely concludes that one can assume that the job is never finished. There are always new people in the community and despite various attempts not everyone always gets the word.

Beyond the more popular methods of advertising let me urge you to look to the community you serve to see if there aren't ways in which together, the college and the community, can be mobilized to allow for more effective information dispensing and enrollment possibilities. As an illustration of this approach, let me cite some possible areas which you might explore. Almost every community has a community school program which is available late in the afternoon, which usually has A/V capabilities and at which clusters of students could come together within the local area for viewing and discussion of television programs. Libraries throughout the country are in a posture of expanding their own present services and very often you will find libraries receptive to housing your A/V equipment so the students can come in on an individual basis to use video and audio materials. The libraries also can be very successful in helping you as part of their overall promotion of increasing participation in college credit courses.

Rehabilitation institutions usually have a component of education and are very eager to work with colleges mutually in the recruitment and the expansion of educational services. This same principle holds true for veterans' hospitals and other governmental facilities which serve confined individuals. Working

with clubs and organizations, either with special interest for a particular course, or for civic clubs and organizations also can be very useful. For example, when we offered an Ornamental Horticulture course, we worked with the home gardening association of the area and they became a very effective recruiter for us. When we offered a classic theater course we worked with some of the local theater groups and they not only provided some of the enrollment but also through their activities, helped promote the use of the course. Great opportunities exist with an upcoming course on Religions of the World, which will be aired over PBS stations this coming fall, to work with various church groups as a great number of denominations are represented in the exposure of these world religions. Joining forces with local travel agencies has great recruitment potential and come colleges have been very successful in arranging study-travel tours retracing the steps of Jacob Bronowski or even following the paths of Kunta Kinte from Africa in his travels in the country in the Roots course.

When we think about advertising, we have the tendency to think of the major metropolitan newspapers, but it has also been our experience that the use of small, weekly or bi-weekly community newspapers has been very helpful. Community newspapers are more likely to do stories about your courses and more likely to give better coverage at no cost or nominal cost as opposed to the major daily papers which charge exhorbitant fees for even the most miniscule advertisements.

If you want to enhance the enrollment of your courses consideration should be given to offering courses that are aired nationwide in prime time slots taking advantage of the national publicity that inevitably comes through the efforts of the Public Broadcast Service stations, the Corporation of Public

Broadcasting and through the commercial underwriters who do a good deal of promotion of the TV series. The formula for success is concise. The better the viewing time the better the audience.

The national promotion of the Jacob Bronowski Ascent of Man program got not only in this country but throughout Europe was phenomenal. Perhaps no other televison program in the history of the media received as much advance publicity as did Roots. Having a course attendant to the Roots program enabled the colleges that offered this program to ride the advertising and promotional wings of Madison Avenue. Just to give you a short example let me show you this brief clip which was prepared for national airing on the PBS stations nationwide for the Jeanne Wolf interview program. This was with Alex Haley in advance of the January showing of Roots.

In designing the overall recruitment plan do not leave out your own college faculty. There is no question in my mind that the faculty can be one of the most effective supporters and recruiters for your educational television programs. However, in order to get them on your team it is necessary to; make available to them your current thinking regarding educational television, you need to emphasize the concept of reaching the new clientele, you need to share with them existing research about the success of such endeavors and you need to lay out specifically and clearly the purposes and objectives for educational television in your institution.

There has long been a fear on the part of faculty that as soon as educational television entered a college, faculty jobs were in jeopardy, that productivity was going to be inordinately increased, that the subject matter would be diluted, etc., etc. The truth of the matter is, as we have found it to be the case at our College and the research is indicating the same for many

other colleges, that when the thrust is out to reach the thus far unreached, this, in fact, has a positive rather than negative effect on the college environment. The security of starting back to college through the comforts and privacy of your own livingroom without fear of pressure or insecurities that can result from a campus situation has led television to serve as an excellent reentry vehicle for individuals to regain confidence in going back to college. Not only has it not taken away from campus enrollments, but in the long term analysis, it has enhanced campus registrations.

And finally, do not underestimate or neglect the students in your recruitment plan. Students can sell your courses best for you at no cost. Institution after institution reports that the word of mouth is the most frequently mentioned and most effective publicity source for enrollment in television courses. Let me mention just one danger. I talked earlier about the diploma mill of selling Ph.D's. Let me hasten to point out that unless properly promoted television courses can easily be perceived by the public as "selling" college credit for watching "the tube". The word of mouth from student to student can enhance your endeavors to reach that clientele if you have a quality program or it will wipe you out if you offer a superficial or an inferior product.

I am not naive enough to think that any one of us on the panel can tell you precisely and specifically how to work your recruitment program. This must be accomplished by carefully considering your own institution and its unique setting. However I hope that some of my thoughts will be helpful. Thank you.

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